

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1-4, 6-13, 27, 28, and 30-39 remain in the application. Claims 1-4, 6-13, 27, 28, and 30-32 are subject to examination and claims 33-39 have been withdrawn from examination. Claims 1, 11, 12, 13, 27, 30, 31, and 32 have been amended. Claims 5 and 29 are canceled herewith and claims 14-26 were previously canceled.

Applicants appreciatively acknowledge the Examiner's statement that claims 5, 11-13, 29, 31, and 32 "would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims."

Applicants note that in item 5 on page 1 of the above-identified Office Action the Examiner has indicated that claims 27-32 are allowed. However, applicants believe the Examiner's statement is incorrect and an oversight because claims 27, 28, and 30 have been rejected in item 6 on page 1 and claims 29, 31, and 32 have been objected to in item 7 on page 1 of the Office Action. Applicants will treat claims 27-32 as stated in items 6 and 7.

Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 5 (claim 5 has been canceled) and claims 11-13 each have been made independent and amended to incorporate the subject matter of independent claim 1. Claim 27 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 29 (claim 29 has been canceled) and claims 31-32 have been made independent and amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 27.

In the second item on page 3 under paragraph 3 of the above-identified Office action, claims 1-4 and 6-10 have been rejected as being fully anticipated by Noguchi et al. (U.S. Pat. 6,323,525) (hereinafter "Noguchi") under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e).

In the second item on page 5 under paragraph 4 of the above-identified Office action, claims 27, 28, and 30 have been rejected as being obvious over Bate (U.S. Pat. 4,360,900) in view of Noguchi et al. (U.S. Pat. 6,323,525) (hereinafter "Noguchi") under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

The rejections have been noted and the claims have been amended as discussed above in an effort to even more clearly define the invention of the instant application.

In view of the foregoing amendments to the claims the rejections are deemed moot and discussion of Noguchi and Bate are not deemed necessary at this time.

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of claim 1, 11, 12, 13, 27, 31, or 32. Claims 1, 11, 12, 13, 27, 31, and 32 are, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art. The dependent claims are believed to be patentable as well because they all are ultimately dependent on claim 1 or 27.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-4, 6-13, 27, 28, and 30-32 are solicited.

In the event the Examiner should still find any of the claims to be unpatentable, counsel would appreciate receiving a telephone call so that, if possible, patentable language can be worked out.

If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made.

Appl. No. 09/927,573

Amdt. Dated May 27, 2004

Reply to Office Action of March 15, 2004

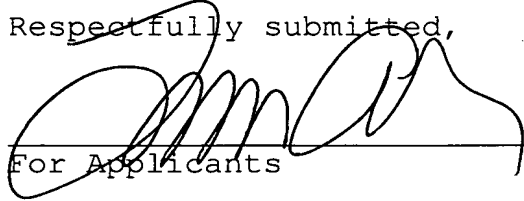
Enclosed herewith is payment in the amount of \$344.00 to cover the number of independent claims in excess (that is, four) of the three independent claims included in the base fee.

Appl. No. 09/927,573
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Please charge any other fees that might be due with respect to
Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to the Deposit Account of Lerner and
Greenberg, P.A., No. 12-1099.

Respectfully submitted,

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For Applicants

FDP/kf

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